

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3057

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY DAIGON

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK GCYUY

CONFIDENTIAL NEW DELHI 10308

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN, VN, VS

SUBJECT: INDIAN RELATIONS WITH PRG

REF: NEW DELHI 7869 (NOTAL)

1. IN THE COURSE OF A FOREIGN POLICY DEBATE IN THE INDIAN PARLIAMENT AUGUST 1, FOREIGN MINISTER SWARAN SINGH MADE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: "WE FEEL A STAGE HAS REACHED WHERE WE MUST HAVE MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE ARRANGEMENT FOR FORMAL CONTACT WITH THE PRG ON IMPORTANT MATTERS NOT ONLY RELATINGHDO THDH COUNTRIES IN THAT REGION BUT ON ALL INTERNATIONAL ISSUES."

2. THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR ASKED MEA JOINT SECRETARY (EAST ASIA) N.B. MENON TO CLARIFY THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S STATEMENT

AND GOI INTENTIONS AUGUST 2. MENON SAID THAT, WHILE HE EARLIER (REFTEL) HAD PERSONALLY SPECULATED THAT THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT TAKE SUCH A STEP, IT HAD BEEN DECIDED THAT IT WOULD BE IN THE INTERESTS OF THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT TO HAVE CONTACTS WITH THE PRG WHICH (A) WOULD NOT INVOLVE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, CONFIDENTIAL

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(B) WOULD NOT INVOLVE "JURIDICAL" CHANGE IN THE GOVERNMENT OF

INDIA'S RELATIONS WITH THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM, (C) WOULD ENABLE THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA TO AVOID DEALING WITH THE PRG THROUGH THE NORTH VIETNAMESE IN NEW DELHI (MENON DESCRIBED THIS AS A "VERY UNSATISFACTORY" ARRANGEMENT), AND (D) WOULD WOULD ENABLE THE GOI TO MAINTAIN ITSELF IN STEP WITH THE 41 OTHER NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES WHICH CURRENTLY HAVE RELATIONS WITH THE PRG. MENON PARTICULARLY FOCUSED ON MAURITIUS AND BANGLADESH AS TWO COUNTRIES WITH CLOSE RELATIONS WITH INDIA WHICH FOLLOWED THIS COURSE.

3. MENON SAID THAT, WHILE THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA HAS MADE NO CLEAR DECISION AS TO THE PRECISE FORM ITS "FORMAL CONTACT" WITH THE PRG WOULD TAKE, HE SPECULATED THAT NOW IT MIGHT WELL BE THAT AN INFORMATION OFFICE WOULD FULFILL THE NEEDS OF THE MOMENT, ASSUMING THIS WAS AGREEABLE TO THE PRG.

4. POLITICAL COUNSELOR PRESSED MENON REPEATEDLY FOR CLARIFICATION AS TO WHY THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA WAS TAKING THIS STEP AT THIS TIME, BUT MENON WAS UNWILLING TO BE SICCIFIC AND REPEATEDLY SAID THE DIRECTION OF INDIAN POLICY HAD BEEN MOVING SLOWLY TOWARD THIS POINT FOR SOME TIME. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION AS TO WHEN A PRG OFFICE WOULD BE SET UP, MENON SPECULATED SOMETIME IN THE NEXT THREE TO FOUR MONTHS, DEPENDING ON HOW DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PRG WENT. MENON REITERATED THAT HE WAS UNDER DIRECT INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTER TO REASSURE THE RVN ACTING CONSUL GENERAL IN NEW DELHI WHEN HE SEES HIM AUGUST 3 THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA DOES NOT CONTEMPLATE ANY CHANGE IN THE CURRENT FRIENDLY RELATIONS BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA AND THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM.

5. MENON SAID HE HOPED THE UNITED STATES WOULD NOT READ TOO MUCH INTO THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S STATEMENT, WHICH HE EMPHASIZED HAD BEEN WORDED WITH EXTREME CARE AND WHOSE INTENT WAS TO AVOID ANY IMPLICATION OF A JURIDICAL RECOGNITION OF THE PRG. POLITICAL COUNSELOR REQUESTED WHETHER THE PHRASE "FORMAL CONTACT" CONVEYED THE LOW-KEY IMPRESSION THAT MENON WAS TRYING TO EMPHASIZE AND NOTED THAT THE USG WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY VIEW THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA'S DECISION WITH REGRET AND CONCERN.

6. COMMENT: THE DECISION TO ACT ON THE PRG'S STATUS WAS OBVIOUSLY CONFIDENTIAL

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A POLITICAL ONE AND APPEARS TO REPRESENT SOME SHIFT IN GOI POLICY IN VERY RECENT WEEKS. THE GOI ACTING CONSUL GENERAL IN SAIGON, FOR EXAMPLE, WAS APPARENTLY UNDER THE IMPRESSION JULY 1 THAT A REQUEST FOR A PRG INFORMATION OFFICE IN NEW DELHI HAD BEEN REJECTED AND WAS NOT UNDER ACTIVE CONSIDERATION BY THE GOI (SAIGON 8792). MENON'S OWN REMARKS (REFTEL) ONLY SIX WEEKS AGO CONVEY THE SAME IMPRESSION. WE ARE NOT ABLE TO PROVIDE ANY CLEAR READING OF WHAT MAY HAVE LED TO THE GOI STATEMENT AT THIS TIME

AND WILL WAIT TO SEE EXACTLY HOW THE INDIANS PROCEED TO NEGOTIATE
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW POLICY.
MOYNIHAN

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